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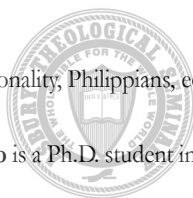
Wilmer Estrada-Carrasquillo  
*The Relational Character of Wesley's Theology and its Implications  
for an Ecclesiology for the Other: A Latino Pentecostal Testimony*<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract**

This article assesses the impact of John Wesley's theology on relationship, both between human beings and God and between human beings within community. This theology of relationality is then used as a framework for reading the Christological hymn in Philippians. Finally the implications of our understanding of a theology of relationality are explored in the light of missiological and ecclesiological lenses. All of this is done through the added lens of the author's experience as a Latino Pentecostal.

**Keywords:** John Wesley, relationality, Philippians, ecclesiology, missiology

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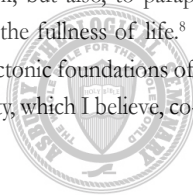


## A Word of Testimony<sup>2</sup>

The experience of displacement,<sup>3</sup> that is, leaving behind what is normal, comfortable, and known to experience foreignness and discomfort, changes your perspective of life. I confess, such has been my experience since I moved to the USA in January of 2011.<sup>4</sup> What I quickly *re*learned<sup>5</sup> was that, social interactions and relationships are central to our humanness –in other words, relationships make us human. In addition, I also *re*affirmed, that, the foundation of such relational nature originates from God's image imprinted in creation.

My move to this nation responds to the God-given opportunity to expand my theological education, first as a graduate student and now in post-graduate work. It is during this educational journey that I became acquainted with the concept of a relational God through my mentors and professors at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, TN and through the writings of Wesleyan scholars. Perhaps, the first time I came across such a thought was by reading Randy Maddox. For me, God's relational nature is summarized in the following phrase found in his book *Responsible Grace*, "I discerned in Wesley's work an abiding concern to preserve the vital tension between two truths that he viewed as co-definitive of Christianity: without God's grace, we *cannot* be saved; while without our ... participation, God's grace *will not* save."<sup>6</sup> According to Maddox, through salvation, though preveniently offered by God to creation, God offers us the opportunity to respond to such an invitation. On the one hand, this speaks of God and human relationality. Christine Pohl's work on Christian hospitality has also been central in shaping my understanding of relational theology from a Wesleyan perspective. In her assessment of Wesley, she understood that to avoid falling into an abstract understanding of hospitality, Wesley insisted "on close face-to-face interactions with the poor and needy persons of English society."<sup>7</sup> This, on the other hand, stresses human-to-human relationality.

Unequivocally, the church has usually emphasized the Divine-human relationality. However, I understand that we are living in a time where the church's commitment to the human-to-human relationality is questioned. As a result, there is a present need of *re*discovering what does it mean to be face-to-face with others. This *re*discovery will not only have great missiological implications, which I believe is central to any Christian task, but also, to paraphrase John Wesley, it has deep implications for experiencing the fullness of life.<sup>8</sup> However, intolerance, fear, and indifference are shifting the tectonic foundations of the Christian movement taking us to a state of non-relationality, which I believe, co-opts the very heart of the *missio Dei*.<sup>9</sup>



With this in mind, let me sketch how the argument of this article is structured. The first section describes how I see John Wesley contributing to a relational theological perspective. Then, I will suggest a reading of Paul's Christological hymn in Philippians through a relational perspective. Finally, I will recommend some implications for affirming the relational nature of the church. I pray that this article helps us reflect upon the relational characteristic of the Christian life, and find ways by which we are able to embody such a relational character in our biblical, theological, and ministerial endeavors.

### Relational Theology in Wesley's Writings

If my reading of John Wesley is right, the relational character of his theology is rooted in the Personhood of God.<sup>10</sup> In section II.3 of the sermon, *The Law Established through Faith, II*, Wesley contrasts faith with love. Vehemently, he warns against the idea that faith precedes love. In the midst of this appeal, he then states the following regarding love and God, "But there was [a place] for love. Love existed from eternity, *in God*, the great ocean of love. Love had a place in all the children of God, from the moment of their creation. They received at once from their gracious Creator to exist, and to love."<sup>11</sup>

There are two things that I find interesting in this quote. First, creation is nothing else than an act of love. God created out of love! According to Wesley, God demonstrated his love to all by calling all things into existence. By doing this, all creation entered into an existing relationship within the triune God. But even more, God not only created, but as the writer of Hebrews reminds us, he "upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3)."<sup>12</sup> Secondly, Wesley connects the existence of that which has been created with the response-ability to love. Thus, we were not created just to exist, but to love God and one another. This point takes us to Wesley's understanding of the *imago Dei*. He explains clearly this connection between creation and love in another of his sermons, *The Image of God*. In it he affirms, "His [man's] affections were rational, even, and regular –if we may be allowed to say 'affections,' for properly speaking he has but one [affection]: man was what God is, Love."<sup>13</sup> And in this state of perfection humans are "capable of participating in God."<sup>14</sup> What else could be this participation in God than an incorruptible relation between the Divine and human and the human-to-human.

Unfortunately, humanity disobeyed God; consequently, this affected the Divine-human and human-to-human relations. Enmity was placed between humanity and God, and as accounted in Genesis, humanity questioned the need to be "my brother's keeper" (Gn. 4:9). Yet, God's love is not only manifested in creation, but even more, God's love was fully embodied in salvation. To paraphrase

Wesley, our fallen state manifested God's love in a whole new way for us.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, commenting on John 3:16, he states "Yea, and this was the very design of God's love in sending him into the world."<sup>16</sup> In other words, that same love in creation was the fuel that ignited the sending of the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, to recreate that which was broken and to reestablish the loss of relationality.

Wesley's relational theology is possible because it is rooted in God's love. Yet, love does not happen in a vacuum. Love is only possible in and through relationships. The danger of loving in isolation is that we may become narcissistic. Hence, for this reason, before loving ourselves first, Jesus placed the *σεαυτοῦ* (the love for me) at the end of the Great Commandment.<sup>17</sup> He says, "The foremost is, ... you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mark 12:29-31). If I am to be loved, I must love first with God's love. The other point that I have tried to convey, according to Wesley, is that our relationality with God presupposes a relationality with our neighbor. If my commentary of Wesley is accurate, then I can go out on the limb of the branch and expand Maddox's quote mentioned previously. If there is any correlation between both themes (responsible grace and God's relationality), then it can be said that responsible grace is not only our response-ability towards God, but also, we should be able to respond in grace to others.

### Christ's Relational *Via* in Philippians

The coming of God to us in the incarnation, underscores God's love and his relational character. Though there are various texts that speak about this event, Paul's account, in the letter to the church at Philippi, depicts God's relationality in a unique way as I learn to live far from home.<sup>18</sup>

Before sharing a reading of Philippians 2:6-8, a comment on Paul's relational character is helpful. Though his letters were written from a distance, he always had the desire and need to be among the people. For example, in his letter to the church in Rome, Paul expresses his desire to be among them by stating, "For I long to see you" (Rom. 1:11). Understanding the distance between him and his readers, Paul still lets them know how much he longs to be among them. Interestingly, by doing this, he was making himself present. Regarding this, Craig Keener attests, "Longing to see a friend was a conventional matter to mention in ancient letters, which were used to convey a sense of one's presence when the writer and the reader were (as often) far apart."<sup>19</sup> But he did not only long to be among them, just for the sake of it, his motivation was deeper. Paul added, "that I may be encouraged *together* with *you* while *among you*, each of *us* by the *other's* faith, *both* yours

and mine” (Rom. 1:12). Paul is not only affirming his desire of accompanying the church and to be of encouragement to them, but he also affirms the important role that the church plays in his life. For Paul, relationality is a two-way street. Even though he has the credentials to play the role of the giver, Paul understands that “there is none so poor in the Church of Christ who may not impart to us something of value.”<sup>20</sup>

This attitude of wanting to be with his readers is not only present in Romans, but is also sustained in other Pauline letters.<sup>21</sup> Another example is found in 1 Corinthians 16:7. There Paul says, “For I do not wish to see you now just in passing, for I hope to *remain* with you for some time.” It is possible that Paul is making a reference to a previous visit, which may have been short. Nevertheless, next time, he expects to be with them for a longer time, that is, “if the Lord permits.” Furthermore, when it was impossible for him to guarantee his presence, Paul made provision through others. For example, in his final remarks in the letter to the Ephesians he states, “I have sent him [Tychicus] to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may *comfort* your hearts” (Eph. 6:22).

As noted, Paul’s ministry is full of examples that affirm the relational nature of the gospel; nevertheless, in Philippians two, he presents Christ’s incarnation as the primary example of relationality. Interestingly, Paul prefaces verses six to eight saying, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). Immediately, Paul explains what he meant. In verse six Paul begins by stating, “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.” Paul’s affirmation of the pre-existence of Christ not only helps to point towards Jesus’ divine nature, but also, that Jesus was about to experience displacement and discomfort. Although he had the authority of seizing his transcendent nature (being in the *morphe* – form – of God), Jesus willingly poured out Himself.<sup>22</sup> Contrasting with verse three, where it says, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit,” Paul “reminds the church at Philippi that everything Christ did in bringing them salvation was the exact opposite,”<sup>23</sup> in humility and voluntary love.<sup>24</sup>

After establishing Christ’s voluntary submission, Paul expresses in verses 7 and 8 how this pouring out happens. The question that rings within me every time I come to this passage is, why does Paul use three unique phrases describing Christ’s incarnation? It seems to me, that Paul’s explanation of Christ’s incarnation can be described as a relational *via*, or way of living. I will attempt to explain this in the following paragraphs.

Let us not forget that Paul’s argument is to present Christ as the perfect servant,<sup>25</sup> and he does so, using the incarnation to make his point. As a result, Paul

describes the event as a three-part way to live relationally with others, a three-way movement, so to speak. He begins by saying, *μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν*, which can be translated as taking the *form* of a bondservant. Following the line of thought of Carolyn Osiek, these three phrases cannot be read disconnected from Christ's voluntary decision of being poured out. Thus, we can say, that Christ voluntarily took the form of a bondservant. To recover the love language used in the previous section, love is not a pit-of-the-stomach feeling, it is a decision, and one that is at its best when is done voluntarily.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Christ lovingly and voluntarily decided to enter from the eternal to the temporal. Therefore, reading this text with the lens of Christ's relational *via*, it is possible to say that relationality begins with taking the form (or the role<sup>27</sup>) of the other. In sum, relationality does not begin by asking other to be like us, but on the contrary, it begins by taking first their form or role.

Subsequently, Paul continues in verse seven by paralleling<sup>28</sup> *μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν* with *ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος*, which can be translated as being made in human *likeness* (NIV). I suspect that by using the term in a parallel form, rather than meaning two events running side by side that do not intersect or overlap, Keener means that there is correspondence between taking the form of bondservant and being made in human likeness. Thus, for Paul, there is a natural movement in Christ's incarnation that goes from voluntarily taking the *form* towards being in the *likeness*. In other words, relationality takes intentionality. Christ was intentional in coming and dwelling among us. Love is not only a decision, but also requires intentionality. Intentional love goes beyond the boundaries from where it all began. In words of Roberta Bondi, "we can never in our human loving reach the limit of our ability to love. This means that though we may love fully at any one moment, it is not perfect love unless that love continues to grow."<sup>29</sup>

Finally, Paul ends his three-phase movement by saying in verse eight, *schemati heuretheis os anthropos*, one translation could be, *found* Himself as human. Christ's incarnational journey ends (though it also begins another phase, that is, his life in this world) finding Himself as human. Christ's sending to this world would not be completed to its full potential with just taking the role of humanity or having the likeness of it, that would have catastrophic soteriological implications. Christ was to find himself embodying the fullness of what it meant to be human. It is only then, by relating to us to the fullest, according to Saint Athanasius, that he "assumed a human body, in order that in it death might once and for all be destroyed, and that men [and women] might be renewed according to the Image."<sup>30</sup> Hence, relationality cannot happen if there is lack of commitment. Jesus committed Himself! His love for humanity was so, that he committed to the extent of accenting "the reality of his humanity."<sup>31</sup>

Paul finishes verse eight by affirming the goal of Christ's relational *via*. That is, his obedience unto the cross for the sake of the other. God had a redeeming plan, and Christ would be the suffering servant (Is. 53) that would fulfill the mission. Christ became "obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8) for the "interest of others" (Phil. 2:4).

### **Ecclesiological Implications: A Latino Pentecostal's Perspective<sup>32</sup>**

Since the past general elections, the topic of otherness has escalated in ways that I have never experienced. However, I must confess that my immigrant reality is not like other immigrant communities—as Puerto Rican born, I am a US citizen. Nevertheless, immigrants who have visas, residence, or citizenship feel the same pressure as those who do not, though in reality we respond differently to it.

What does it mean to love the other in a context like this? How should the church respond in a time where nationalism and politics may take priority over our Christian responsibility towards the other? It has been established that Wesleyan theology models a certain type of relational theology that is rooted in the loving Personhood of God and it is transmitted to us through the creation-event. Then, it was discussed that in the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:5-8, we encounter a relational *via* through Christ's voluntary decision, his intentionality, and commitment to become human for the sake of redeeming the Divine-human and human-to-human relationships. Now, using these two arguments as a foundation, I want to suggest some initial responses to these questions.

#### *Relationality as Natural to the Church*

The church must be a foretaste of God's kingdom here and now. Such an iconic presence is possible because the church does not come into existence by herself, but she has been called by the Father in Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that the church is ontologically equal to God, but it can be stated that she shares the Godhead's relational nature. Leonardo Boff affirms this by arguing that each human being, as a creature made in the image and likeness of the Triune God, will always have a need of other humans.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the human condition presupposes that all human beings are social beings and in need of one another.

As a result, the church should embody her relationality to the other due to her intrinsic relation to the Triune God. Just as God did to us, we are called to do with the other. The character of relationality should manifest itself as a natural current that flows from the community that has become part of the body of Christ. In words of Ren  Padilla, an integral church must be driven by a *wholistic*

spirituality. This spiritual wholeness is not only concerned with the inner life of the church, but also “it calls for a missionary agenda that has on its horizon the church’s involvement in public spaces as part of civil society.”<sup>34</sup> Hence, to live in her nature of relationality, the church must understand that she has been called to *be* in the world even though she is not from the world. Therefore, by way of her relational nature, the church becomes a sacramental sign in the world and an open door for the other.

### *Relationality as Commitment from the Church*

According to the apostle Paul, Christ not only acted willingly, but also obediently. Obediently he humbled himself to death on the cross. It was this unquestionable obedience that nurtured Christ’s commitment during his incarnational *via* and during his ministry. But commitment is painful, it takes us to places we would never imagine, yet, because we are committed we continue moving forward. This only happens when love guides our relational character. Speaking about the range of relationships, Wm. Curtis Holtzen, suggests that contrary to being “accidental and fleeting,” a God-like relationship must be “deeply loving with strong commitment.”<sup>35</sup>

The topic of commitment is an area of much growth for the church. One phenomenon that the contemporary church needs to face is the reality that over sixty percent of the people that attend a church do not live within the community where the church is established. This reality underscores the challenge of commitment. Analogous to the question of the church’s commitment to its community, is the church’s commitment to its immigrant communities. Take for example the Latino community, who in over thirty-five years has grown from being 6.5 percent of the US population to 17.3 percent.<sup>36</sup> In principle, this percentage does not seem big when compared to the total population. However, when we move the conversation into the US religious landscape things take a new perspective. According to another study by Pew Hispanic, a survey conducted to find the distribution of race/ethnicity within denominations in the US, demonstrated that 6.9 percent of Hispanics identified as Pentecostal, while 10.3 percent of Non-Hispanic Blacks identified as Pentecostal, and only 3.2 percent of Non-Hispanic Whites identified as Pentecostal, demonstrating the importance of the Hispanic community within US Pentecostalism.<sup>37</sup> With statistics such as these, the question cannot be if the church needs to be more open to the other, but when.

In *Slow Church*, Christopher Smith and John Pattison challenge the church to become rooted in their communities. For them, just as Christ became flesh, the church needs to be incarnated in its communities. They expand, to be



agents of change and of reconciliation; we need to be rooted (committed) in a particular place.<sup>38</sup> Smith and Pattison are placing high value in the practice of being committed. The local church is not present when she only exists for those who walk in and worship Sunday after Sunday. She is also called-out as an agent of solidarity, change, and community transformation. In short, a non-embodied Christianity walks away from the realities of life and any interaction will be driven by selfish intentions.<sup>39</sup>

### *Relationality as a Fruit of the Holy Spirit in the Church*

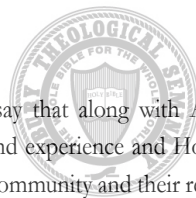
Pentecostal hermeneutic and theology —especially from the classical Pentecostal stream— is rooted in the Lukan accounts found in the books of Luke and Acts. Such preference does not reject the rest of the biblical narrative, but it defines the lens through which “pentecostals read and engage the Bible.”<sup>40</sup> Of the two accounts written by Luke, Acts 2 serves as the primary paradigm for Pentecostals. In it we find the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, that in the latter days “I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (Joel. 2:28).

Commenting on the relationship of Joel’s prophecy in relation to the Acts 2 event, Yong explains that with the coming of the Holy Spirit “the experience and voices of those previously marginalized and excluded now were central to the church’s witness.”<sup>41</sup> By marginalized, Yong does not only mean women, young, old and slaves, as is foretold by the prophet, but also “cultural plurality.”<sup>42</sup> Hence, just as the Christ relational incarnation was possible in the power of the Holy Spirit, the church’s relationality in the world is contingent to the Holy Spirit’s activity in and through the church.

The Spirit-filled community of Acts embodied what it was like to live in a relational *via*. The fruits of the Spirit-led church were in full display, not only with those within, sharing of goods (Acts 2:44-47), but also with those without, praying for those in need (Acts 3:1-10); preaching the gospel to the gentiles (Acts 10); by breaking the wall of otherness (Acts 15:1-30). The Holy Spirit both empowered and encouraged them to do so. As a result, they were faithful to God and hospitable to all who had needs.

### **Conclusion**

It may be fair to say that along with Albert Outler’s quadrilateral of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience and Howard Snyder’s creation, Wesley was also concerned with the community and their relationality. The community was



a central component for the people called Methodist. To the extent that Wesley recommended those Christians who lived in isolation, that “Such retirement must not swallow up all our time; this would be to destroy, not advance, true religion.”<sup>43</sup> We are living in a world full of hostility and skepticism that lacks the gift of healthy relationships. I pray that regardless of the abyss that exists between you/me and whoever you/I consider the other, we may have the same attitude that was in Christ, that is, the intentionality and commitment to take not only the role and likeness, but find ourselves with the other.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> I understand that the Pentecostal phenomenon has many starting points and forms of expression, and consequently, as Allan Anderson states, it is better to talk Pentecostals (in plural) rather than Pentecostalism (in singular). Nevertheless, instead of taking the long route, I will rely on Donald Dayton’s study on the theological roots of North American Pentecostalism, which succinctly summarizes this point.

In his study, Dayton takes his reader through an empirical, historical, and theological journey that connects North American Pentecostalism to the Holiness movements of the nineteenth century. During his research, Dayton finds that Pentecostals follow a theological pattern that is “well-nigh universal within the movement.” This pattern, also known as the Full Gospel, confesses Jesus as Savior, Baptizer, Healer, and coming King. However, it is important to note, though Dayton upholds this fourfold pattern as one that “expresses more clearly and cleanly the logic of Pentecostal theology,” he also recognizes a fivefold pattern which “was historically prior.”

From this pattern (or patterns) emerge those Pentecostal churches located within the North American classical Pentecostal category. Within this category, Dayton identifies three theological streams that stem from it. These are, Wesleyan Holiness, Finished Work, and Keswick. The Church of God (Cleveland), the denomination with whom I hold my credentials, historically connects to the Wesleyan Holiness movement.

The histories of the Wesleyan Holiness movement and the Finished Work movement are closely intertwined. Prior to their schism, early Pentecostals embraced the Holiness movement’s theological teaching of entire sanctification. Nonetheless, in the early stages of the movement, “The Finished Work controversy challenged the two fundamental premises of this doctrine [sanctification] —that there is a second act of grace and that it eradicates the very desire to sin.” The result of this fission was the development of two Pentecostal streams. Those who follow the teaching of Finished Work and the fourfold pattern of Jesus as Savior, Baptizer, Healer, and coming King. On the other hand, are Pentecostals who are theologically aligned with the Wesleyan Holiness movement and the fivefold pattern of Jesus as Savior, *Sanctifier*, Baptizer, Healer, and coming King. This emphasis on sanctification, as a distinct work of grace, has been central to Wesleyan-Pentecostals. See the following sources, Allan Anderson et al., eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, *The Anthropology of Christianity* 10 (Berkeley,

CA: University of California Press, 2010), 13–29; Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA : Hendrickson Pub., c1987., 1987), 21; Adam Scott Stewart, ed., *Handbook of Pentecostal Christianity* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012), 85, 89–91 and 128.

<sup>2</sup> By testimony I do not merely mean a retelling of a story. For Pentecostals, the testifying event entails a central locus of our theology and spirituality. To cite Jackie David Johns and Cheryl Bridges Johns, among other things, the testimony “involves reflection and interpretation.” See, Jackie David Johns and Cheryl Bridges Johns, “Yielding to the Spirit: A Pentecostal Approach to Group Bible Study,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1, no. 1 (1992): 109–34.

<sup>3</sup> Whether forcefully, reluctantly, or willingly.

<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that otherness is only experienced in the United States of America. However, my experience is connected to this nation.

<sup>5</sup> When we live comfortably many things are taken for granted, thus we are removed there are things that need to be relearned.

<sup>6</sup> Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 19. Maddox adds, “It makes clear that God's indispensable gift of gracious forgiveness and empowerment is fundamental, while capturing Wesley's characteristic qualification of such empowerment as enabling rather than overriding human responsibility.”

<sup>7</sup> Though is very important to notice the use of hospitality today, had a different meaning in Wesley's time. See, Christine D. Pohl, “Practicing Hospitality in the Face Of ‘complicated Wickedness,’” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 42, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 28.

<sup>8</sup> John Wesley, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 532–39.

<sup>9</sup> David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 10. Bosch defines it as, “God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate.”

<sup>10</sup> Barry L. Callen affirms this when he says, “God is understood to be truly personal, loving, and not manipulative. The interaction of the wills of Creator and creature is real. In contrast to the Reformed or Calvinistic tradition that features a more static and predetermined God-creature relationship, the relational tradition emphasizes the responsive compassion of the sovereign God.” See, Barry L. Callen “John Wesley and Relational Theology” in Brint Montgomery, Thomas Jay Oord, and Karen Winslow, eds., *Relational Theology: A Contemporary Introduction* (San Diego, CA: Point Loma Press and Wipf & Stock Pub., 2012), Kindle, 111.

<sup>11</sup> John Wesley, “The Law Established through Faith, II,” in Wesley, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 282. My italics.

<sup>12</sup> Unless notified, all scripture references are from New American Standard Bible 1995 version.

<sup>13</sup> John Wesley, "The Image of God" in Wesley, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 68.

<sup>15</sup> Wesley, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 475–84.

<sup>16</sup> "The Wesley Center Online: Notes On The Gospel According To St John," accessed April 7, 2017, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/notes-on-the-gospel-according-to-st-john/#Chapter+III>.

<sup>17</sup> Greek text is taken from, Nestle, Eberhard, Erwin Nestle, Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger. *The Greek New Testament with McReynolds English Interlinear*. 27th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> I must also say, that my concept of *home* has been transformed as I became the immigrant, the Other and the Latino. As a Christian, regardless of where is my homeland –geographically speaking– pilgrimage is intrinsic to the Christian story. We are a people on the move, not only because people movement has shaped the way this world keeps forming, but as a Christ's body, we are called-out-ones –the *ecclesia*– walking towards a promise land. What I have learned, like Abram, who was called out from his country, from his relatives and from the house of his father, my leaving *from* what was known to me, to a land that I will show you, I was left *homeless*, but God Himself, like with Abram, became my household. He is the one in who "we live and move and exist" (Acts 17: 28)

<sup>19</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 02 edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 414.

<sup>20</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Ro 1:12). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, (electronic source accessed May 17, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> The author holds Paul's authorship from Romans to Philemon.

<sup>22</sup> I understand that this is a key verse of the hymn and that are long debates about how to translate *ekenosen* (I will stay away from biting). Thus, I will adhere to Craig Keener's language, that is, Christ poured out Himself to become human for the sake of the other. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 560.

<sup>23</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 202.

<sup>24</sup> Carolyn Osiek, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: Philippians & Philemon*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000). She explains, "The verb of emptying, *ekenosen*, is modified by the intensive reflexive *heauton*, himself. Thus the sense is active, not that Christ was emptied or humiliated, but that by his own choice he performed this action."

<sup>25</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 560.

<sup>26</sup> Regarding this point Roberta Bondi says, "We all belong to two worlds, the world of God in whose image we are created, and the blind, natural world of the animals, which operates according to laws that have little to do with a conscious decision to love." See, Roberta C. Bondi, *To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), Kindle, 271.

<sup>27</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 560.

<sup>28</sup> Both, Keener and Osiek have a similar idea. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 560; Osiek, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*.

<sup>29</sup> Bondi, *To Love as God Loves*, Kindle, 271.

<sup>30</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation* (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 29.

<sup>31</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 215.

<sup>32</sup> It is not surprising that Wesley's relational approach to theology found a home in a Latino Pentecostal. On the one hand Latinos/as have a high sense of community. For example, familiar relationships reach far beyond grandparents, parents and children. These stretch towards the extended family and even friends. On the other hand, the aftermath of the Spirit baptism account in Acts 2, nurtured a sense of community and relationality with God and the community. See, Wilmer Estrada-Carrasquillo, "A Latina/o Pentecostal Response to the McDonaldization Process of the Church in the United States," in Néstor Medina and Sammy Alfaro, eds., *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Latin America and Latino Communities*, Christianity and Renewal-Interdisciplinary Studies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 199–210.

<sup>33</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, Reprint edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub., 2005), 149.

<sup>34</sup> René Padilla, "Preface," in Darío López Rodríguez, *Pentecostalismo y misión integral: teología del espíritu, teología de la vida* (Lima, Peru: Ediciones Puma, 2008), 7.

<sup>35</sup> Wm. Curtis Holtzen, "Faith in Relations" in Montgomery, Oord, and Winslow, *Relational Theology*, Kindle, 520.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/04/19/2014-statistical-information-on-hispanics-in-united-states/>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2007/04/25/ii-religion-and-demography/>

<sup>38</sup> C. Christopher Smith, *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 62.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>40</sup> Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology*, The Cadbury Lectures 2009 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010), 106.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “The Wesley Center Online: Sermon 24 - Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: Discourse Four,” accessed August 10, 2014, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-24-upon-our-lords-sermon-on-the-mountain-discourse-four/>.

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